

[15-K-E411]

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20 September 1973

BRIEFING FOR  
20 SEPTEMBER WSAG MEETING

THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA

I. In Cambodia, the FANK is holding up well and the military situation is better than might have been anticipated before US air operations ceased on 15 August. FANK is far from out of the woods, however.

A. The Khmer Communist offensive against Kompong Cham fizzled out in the face of the government's defense of that city.

1. The performance of government ground, naval, and air elements at Kompong Cham should have some tonic effect on military and civilian morale.

2. The battle for Kompong Cham may not be over yet

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Attached to U cover sheet re Cambodia, 20 Sept. 1973

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B. Elsewhere, insurgent pressure has eased against several key highways leading into Phnom Penh.

1. Government forces have reopened Route 1 some seven miles southeast of Phnom Penh, and the insurgents have surrendered their hold over a section of Route 4 fifteen miles southwest of the capital. Convoys are once again moving over this route.
2. The insurgents still occupy a portion of Route 5, however, some 35 miles northwest of Phnom Penh.
3. Military action in the immediate vicinity of Phnom Penh remains relatively light.

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and Mekong River resupply convoys continue to encounter only minor harassment.

II. Prince Sihanouk, meanwhile, is taking a somber line on the insurgents' military prospects.

A. In press interviews this week he indicated that a military stalemate is in the making in Cambodia unless the insurgents get more external support.

1. Sihanouk is blaming Hanoi for not giving adequate aid to the insurgents.

2. He claims that the North Vietnamese are no longer willing to transport Chinese supplies to the borders of Cambodia.

3. He also claims that the Vietnamese have withdrawn their ammunition stocks from Cambodia, thus denying them to the insurgents.

4. Sihanouk offered an explanation for these alleged actions. He said Hanoi wants a negotiated settlement in Cambodia because it both fears US retaliation and wants US aid.

B. There is, of course, an element of scapegoatism in Sihanouk's remarks. He is dis-

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appointed over the failure to take Kompong Cham, and his commanders in the field are blaming the Vietnamese for what is, at least in part, their own deficiency.

1. Nonetheless, Sihanouk has been asserting ever since last January that the Vietnamese have cut off arms and ammunition supplies. He accepted the stoppage with equanimity until June, when his "defense minister", Khiou Samphan asked him to request a resumption of supplies.

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By Sep-

tember, Sihanouk stated publicly that Hanoi had signed an agreement to supply his force with arms and ammunition and be reimbursed by the Chinese. It's that agreement which Sihanouk now implies is not working as he anticipated.

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[REDACTED] there are continuing supply problems. It is still not possible, however, to pin down whether these stem from a general scarcity, or from the inevitable dislocations and shortages of the battlefield situation.

- III. On the political front in Phnom Penh, government leaders are still preoccupied over the future of the High Political Council.
- A. Although it now seems likely that the council's mandate will be renewed next month, Lon Nol is still mulling over the question.
1. The future of the In Tam government is also before the council.
  2. Prime Minister In Tam clearly would like to quit, but thus far has been dissuaded.
  3. Nevertheless, some sort of government reshuffle seems to be in the cards soon.

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